



Embajada de los Estados Unidos de América

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Statement by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Sixteenth World Press Freedom Day

As the United States celebrates World Press Freedom Day, we hail the courageous sacrifices made by journalists around the world to report the facts, even at the cost of their lives and their freedom. Every day brave men and women risk harassment, beatings, detention, imprisonment and even death simply for seeking to share the truth with others around the world. In other countries, the crack down on press freedoms include: tightening libel laws, a concentration of media ownership, restricted Internet search engines and diminishing independent press outlets.

In China, 62 cyber dissidents are being held in prison. Zhao Yan, a *New York Times* researcher, was also charged with revealing state secrets in connection with a 2004 *New York Times* story on leadership changes in China. Despite the charges recently being dropped, he has still not been released. In Zimbabwe, security forces selectively harassed, beat and arbitrarily arrested members of the media.

In Venezuela, the combination of new laws governing libel and broadcast media content, legal harassment against journalists, and physical intimidation has resulted in limitations on press freedoms and a climate of self-censorship. In Russia, the government continued to weaken media independence, particularly of the major television networks. In Iran, press freedom has eroded. In addition to harassing and imprisoning journalists, the Iranian culture ministry ordered the daily newspaper Asia to be closed, and banned a planned women's publication, Nour-e Banovan, from being published.

While the United States will continue working to advocate for greater global press freedom, all free societies carry the responsibility to press restrictive governments to allow an open press. Independent media empowers people, exposes corruption, encourages transparency and prompts participation in the political process. Without it, society as a whole suffers.